

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3826

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 4736

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH MARIO SOARES

REF: LISBON 4674 DTG 141746Z AUG 75

SUMMARY: SOARES CONTINUES OPTIMISTIC. SAYS COPCON DOCUMENT WAS SMOKESCREEN AND OTELO AND MELO ANTUNES HAVE REACHED A COMMON AGREEMENT. PCP IS STILL IN DISARRAY. CUNHAL'S COUNTER-OFFENSIVE OF RALLIES IN OUTLYING AREAS WAS TO CULMINATE IN LISBON RALLY IN SUPPORT OF PRIME MINISTER . ENTIRE THING FAILED. BY HOLDING DEMONSTRATIONS WHERE THEY KNOW VIOLENCE WILL RESULT, COMMUNISTS COULD BE BAITING THE SOCIALISTS AND PROVOKING THE GOVERNMENT, BUT HE THINKS CUNHAL IS SIMPLY TRYING TO REBUILD PARTY. PCP IS LOSING SO MANY SUPPORTERS THAT SOARES ESTIMATES THEY LACK THE CAPACITY TO PULL OFF ANY KIND OF FABRICATED RIGHTWING THREAT. PS AND PPS ARE NOW WORKING MORE CLOSELY TO-
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GETHER. CDS IS BEING REJUVENATED AS A PARTY. SOARES THINKS

VASCO GONCALVES IS THROUGH BUT, LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, IS UNABLE TO EXPLAIN PRESIDENT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR HIM. END SUMMARY

1. SPENT AN HOUR THE EVENING OF AUGUST 19 WITH MARIO SOARES AT HIS PRIVATE COTTAGE LOCATED IN A RURAL AREA 40 MILES FROM LISBON. ONLY OTHER PERSON PRESENT WAS SOARE'S FORMER CHIEF OF CABINET, FSO MANUEL SA MACHADO, WHO HAD DRIVEN ME TO SITE IN PRIVATE CAR. WHILE SOARES RECUPERATING FROM FLU HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAD ASKED ME TO MEET HIM OUTSIDE LISBON FOR SECURITY PURPOSES. (COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA CALLING HIM A STOOGUE OF THE "REACTIONARIES" AND "IMPERIALISTS" IS INCREASING.)

2. SOARES SAID MELO ANTUNES GROUP AND OTELO HAD COMPLETED A COMMON PROGRAM. COPCON DOCUMENT (REFTEL) WAS NOTHING BUT A SMOKESCREEN TO ALLOW OTELO MANEUVERING ROOM. IT WAS WRITTEN BY A GROUP OF COPCON OFFICERS WHO WERE NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF OTELO'S STAFF. EVEN ON ITS FACE, ONE COULD SEE THAT IT WAS NOT OTELO'S DOCUMENT SINCE IT WAS FAR TOO SHALLOW FOR A MAN "AS SMART AS OTELO."

4. SOARES WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT MELO ANTUNES'S EFFORTS, BUT AGREED "THE NINE" HAD TO MOVE FAST IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR MOMENTUM. I NOTED THAT VASCO GONCALVES AND PCP WERE FIGHTING BACK. BUT I COULD NOT SEE HOW VASCO GONCALVES'S LAST TWO SPEECHES WOULD HELP HIM. SOARES SAID VASCO GONCALVES IS A MAN WHOSE SPEECHES HAVE PUT HIM BOTH IN THE GOVERNMENT AND IN THE OPPOSITION. HE IS THROUGH, AND THE ONLY PUZZLE IS WHY COSTA GOMES DOESN'T RECOGNIZE IT AND ACT. THE MELO ANTUNES GROUP ARE REACHING THE POINT WHERE THEY HAVE TO FORCE HIS HAND.

5. I ASKED SOARES ABOUT INCREASING VIOLENCE AND CUNHAL'S RECENT FORAYS INTO CONSERVATIVE STRONGHOLDS. COULD NOT THIS BE A TACTICAL MOVE DESIGNED TO TRAP THE SOCIALISTS BY FORCING THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEM? SOARES SAID ENTRAPMENT WAS ALWAYS POSSIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE THE SOCIALISTS HAD FOUND A THREE-FOOT HIGH STACK OF "ELP TRACTS" IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY HEADQUARTERS AT FAMILICAO. HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE THEY HAD BEEN PRINTED, BUT THEY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION TO SOARES FOR WORKING WITH ELP AND THEN SAID WHEN WE ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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THROUGH WITH YOU WE WILL "SHOOT YOU IN THE NECK." SOARES POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS THE LINE THE PCP WAS GENERALLY TAKING WITH REGARD TO ELP AND THE SOCIALISTS. HE ASSUMED DOCUMENTS WERE PCP FORGERIES.

6. WHILE ENTRAPMENT, OR EVEN THE FABRICATION OF A RIGHT-WING PLOT BY THE PCP, WAS ALWAYS A POSSIBILITY, SOARES THOUGHT THE PCP WAS LOSING ITS CAPACITY TO DO THIS. NOW THAT IT WAS

ON THE DEFENSIVE MANY OF ITS SUPPORTERS WERE LEAVING. CUNHAL'S RECENT CAMPAIGN TO HOLD RALLIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WAS FUNDAMENTALLY AN EFFORT TO REBUILD THE PARTY. BUT HE WAS NOT SUCCEEDING.

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7. SOARES CITED THE CASE OF ALCOBACA. THERE THE PCP AND VASCO GONCALVES GOT THEIR WIRES CROSSED. CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, ALCOBACA IS NOT AN ANTI-COMMUNIST STRONGHOLD. PCP HAS ALWAYS BEEN STRONG THERE. CUNHAL HOPED TO HAVE A MASS TURN-OUT WHICH WOULD THEN SPARK A DEMONSTRATION IN LISBON IN FAVOR OF THE PRIME MINISTER. THIS DEMONSTRATION WAS TO BE HELD AT MID-NIGHT, "OF ALL TIMES," SOARES SAID. HE RECEIVED CONFIRMATION WHEN SOCIALIST HEADQUARTERS WERE INUNDATED BY A WAVE OF MIDNIGHT TELEPHONE CALLS SAYING THAT THE COMMUNISTS WERE RINGING DOORBELLS THROUGHOUT LISBON IN AN EFFORT TO TURN THE PEOPLE OUT. HOWEVER BARELY A HUNDRED APPEARED IN FRONT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE, AND MOST OF THOSE WHO DID SHOW UP HAD TO BE SENT TO ALCOBACA TO HELP RESCUE THE BELEAGUERED CUNHAL.

8. I ASKED SOARES HOW THE SOCIALISTS WERE GETTING ALONG WITH THE PPD THESE DAYS. HAD THEY SETTLED THEIR DIFFERENCES? SOARES SAID THAT BASICALLY THEY WERE GETTING ALONG. HE HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE NEW PPD SECRETARY GENERAL GUERREIRO, BUT HE HAD CONFIDENCE IN MAGALHAES MOTA, RUI MACHETE, PINTO BALSEMAO AND SA CARNEIRO. THE PPD WAS NOW BEGINNING TO MOVE OUT MORE VIGOROUSLY. HE AGREED THAT IT WAS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE SOCIALISTS TO HAVE A VIGOROUS PPD.

9. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, HE NOTED, WAS TO INSURE THE SURVIVAL OF THE CDS. MANY PEOPLE HAD WRITTEN THE CDS OFF BUT IN HIS JUDGMENT THE CDS LEADERSHIP, PARTICULARLY FREITAS DO AMARAL, WAS AMONG THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY. HIS FEELING WAS THAT THE CDS HAD GAINED SUPPORT SINCE THE ELECTIONS.

10. SOARES STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF EVERYBODY FALLING INTO LINE BEHIND MELO ANTUNES, WHOSE GROUP REPRESENTED THE BEST HOPE FOR PORTUGAL. HE URGED AGAIN THAT USG BACK MELO ANTUNES. I SAID THAT WE HAD NOT BEEN IN RECENT TOUCH WITH ANTUNES GROUP SINCE THEY WERE IN HIDING AND CONTACT WITH US WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE SENSITIVE. BUT SECRETARY'S RECENT STATEMENT MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE SUPPORTED PORTUGUESE MODERATES.

11. COMMENT: SOARES'S ASSESSMENT MAY BE SLIGHTLY ON THE OPTIMISTIC SIDE, BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT PCP IS ON THE DEFENSIVE AND THAT FASCO GONCALVES IS SIMPLY MAKING HIS POSITION WORSE BY HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS. NEITHER SOARES NOR ANYBODY ELSE IN PORTUGAL CAN UNDERSTAND OR EXPLAIN COSTA GOME'S CURIOUS DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE TO BACK VASCO GONCALVES IN THE FACE OF LATTER'S CLEAR LOSS OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE. CARLUCCI

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